



**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES  
DEPARTMENT OF AUDITOR-CONTROLLER**

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April 7, 2009

TO: Supervisor Don Knabe, Chairman  
Supervisor Gloria Molina  
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas  
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky  
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

FROM: Wendy L. Watanabe *Wendy L. Watanabe*  
Auditor-Controller

SUBJECT: **HATHAWAY-SYCAMORES CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES  
CONTRACT REVIEW**

We have completed a contract compliance review of Hathaway-Sycamores Child and Family Services (Hathaway-Sycamores or Agency), a Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Foster Family Agency service provider.

**Background**

DCFS contracts with Hathaway-Sycamores, a private non-profit community-based organization to recruit, train and certify foster care parents for the supervision of children placed in foster care by DCFS. Once the Agency places a child, it is required to monitor the placement until the child is discharged from the program.

Hathaway-Sycamores is required to hire qualified social workers to provide case management and act as a liaison between DCFS and foster parents. The Agency oversees a total of 40 certified foster homes in which 71 DCFS children were placed at the time of our review. Hathaway-Sycamores is located in the Fifth District.

DCFS pays Hathaway-Sycamores a negotiated monthly rate, per child placement, established by the California Department of Social Services' (CDSS) Foster Care Rates Bureau. Based on the child's age, Hathaway-Sycamores receives between \$1,589 and

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\$1,865 per month, per child. Out of these funds, the Agency pays the foster parents between \$700 and \$820 per month, per child. DCFS paid Hathaway-Sycamores approximately \$1.4 million during Fiscal Year 2007-08.

### **Purpose/Methodology**

The purpose of the review was to determine whether Hathaway-Sycamores was providing the services outlined in their Program Statement and the County contract. We reviewed certified foster parent files, children's case files, personnel files and interviewed the Agency's staff. We also visited a number of certified foster homes and interviewed several children and foster parents.

### **Results of Review**

The six foster homes we visited were well maintained. The foster parents stated that the services they received from Hathaway-Sycamores generally met their expectations and the children stated that they enjoyed living with their foster parents. In addition, the Agency social workers' caseloads did not exceed the maximum established by CDSS Title 22 regulations. However, Hathaway-Sycamores did not always comply with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. For example:

- Three of the ten Needs and Services Plans (NSPs) did not contain goals that were specific, measurable and attainable, indicate the reason the child was in placement, and were not approved by the children's DCFS social worker as required.
- Three Quarterly Reports did not contain an Emancipation Preparation Contract as required for children 14 years of age and older. At the time of our review, three children were over 14 years old. In addition, two of the three NSPs for children over 14 years old did not address emancipation and independent living services.
- Two of the six children taking psychotropic medications did not have monthly evaluations by the prescribing physician documented in their case files.
- Two of the ten case files reviewed did not contain documentation that the children were visited weekly by the Agency's social workers during their first three months of placement. We noted seven required visits that were not documented.
- Three of the ten case files reviewed did not contain documentation that the DCFS social workers were updated monthly regarding the children's progress.
- Two of the case files did not contain an age exception approval from CDSS. In order for children over 18 years of age to remain in foster care, approval from

CDSS is required. At the time of our review, two children receiving foster care services were over 18 years of age.

- Two of six certified foster parent certification files did not contain all the required information, including documentation of current automobile insurance and CPR/First Aid Certificates. Prior to the conclusion of our review, the Agency provided documentation of current automobile insurance and the foster parents obtained current CPR/First Aid Certificates.

The details of our review along with recommendations for corrective action are attached.

### **Review of Report**

We discussed our report with Hathaway-Sycamores on September 26, 2008. In their attached response, the Agency indicates agreement with our findings and the actions they are taking to implement the recommendations. We also notified DCFS of the results of our review.

We thank Hathaway-Sycamores for their cooperation and assistance during this review. Please call me if you have any questions or your staff may contact Don Chadwick at (213) 253-0301.

WLW:MMO:DC:AA

Attachment

c: William T Fujioka, Chief Executive Officer  
Patricia S. Ploehn, Director, Department of Children and Family Services  
Ted Myers, Chief Deputy Director, Department of Children and Family Services  
Susan Kerr, Senior Deputy Director, Department of Children and Family Services  
Robert Fitzgerald, Chairman, Board of Directors, Hathaway-Sycamores  
William P. Martone, Executive Director, Hathaway-Sycamores  
Jean Chen, Community Care Licensing  
Public Information Office  
Audit Committee

**FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY PROGRAM  
HATHAWAY-SYCAMORES CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES  
FISCAL YEAR 2007-2008**

**BILLED SERVICES**

**Objective**

Determine whether Hathaway-Sycamores Child and Family Services (Hathaway-Sycamores or Agency) provided program services in accordance with their County contract and California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Title 22 regulations.

**Verification**

We visited six of the 40 Los Angeles County certified foster homes that Hathaway-Sycamores billed the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) in March and April 2008, and interviewed six foster parents, six of the ten children and observed two toddlers placed in the six homes. We also reviewed the case files for seven foster parents and ten children. In addition, we reviewed the Agency's monitoring activity.

**Results**

All six homes visited were well maintained. In addition, the foster parents stated that the services they received from the Agency generally met their expectations and the children stated that they enjoyed living with their foster parents.

Hathaway-Sycamores needs to ensure that Needs and Services Plans (NSPs), Quarterly Reports and case files contain all the required information. The Agency also needs to ensure that children taking psychotropic medications have monthly evaluations by the prescribing physician documented in their case files and that children are visited weekly by the Agency's social workers during their first three months of placement. We specifically noted the following:

**Needs and Services Plans/Quarterly Reports**

- Three (30%) of the ten NSPs reviewed were not approved by the children's DCFS social worker as required.
- Three (30%) of the ten NSPs reviewed did not contain goals that were specific, measurable and attainable and did not indicate the reason the child was in placement.
- Three Quarterly Reports did not contain an Emancipation Preparation Contract as required for children 14 years of age and older. At the time of our review, three children were over 14 years old. In addition, two of the three NSPs for children over 14 years old did not address emancipation and independent living services.

Our prior review also noted that Hathaway-Sycamores did not always ensure that NSPs were approved by the DCFS social worker and contained all the required information.

#### Medical Services and Children's Case Files

- Two (33%) of the six children taking psychotropic medications did not have monthly evaluations by their prescribing physician documented in their case files. During a two month period, three required visits were not documented for the two children.
- Two (20%) of the ten case files reviewed did not contain documentation that the children were visited weekly by the Agency's social workers during their first three months of placement. During this period, seven required visits were not documented.
- Three (30%) of the ten case files reviewed did not contain documentation that the DCFS social workers were updated monthly regarding the children's progress.
- Two of the case files did not contain an age exception approval from CDSS. In order for children over 18 years of age to remain in foster care, approval from CDSS is required. At the time of our review, two children receiving foster care services were over 18 years of age.

#### Foster Parent Certification

- One (14%) of the seven foster parents did not complete 15 hours of annual continuing education training. The foster parent only completed eight hours of continuing education. Our prior audit review also noted that Hathaway-Sycamores did not ensure that foster parents met the ongoing training requirement.
- Two (29%) of the seven foster parent certification files reviewed did not contain documentation of current automobile insurance. Prior to the conclusion of our review, Hathaway-Sycamores provided documentation of current automobile insurance for the two foster parents.
- Two (29%) of the seven foster parent certification files did not contain valid CPR/First Aid certificates. The CPR/First Aid certificates had expired in January 2008. Prior to the conclusion of our review, the two foster parents obtained current CPR/First Aid certificates.

#### Recommendations

**Hathaway-Sycamores management ensure:**

- 1. Needs and Services Plans contain all the required information including goals that are specific, measurable and attainable and indicate the reason the child is in placement.**

2. Needs and Services Plans are approved by the children's DCFS social worker.
3. For children 14 years of age or older, Quarterly Reports contain Emancipation Preparation Contracts and Transitional Independent Living Plans and Needs and Services Plans address emancipation and independent living services.
4. Children taking psychotropic medications are seen monthly by their prescribing physician.
5. Children are visited weekly during the first three months of placement by the Agency's social workers.
6. DCFS social workers are updated monthly regarding the children's progress.
7. For children 18 years of age or older, age exception approvals are obtained from CDSS.
8. Foster parents complete the required number of annual continuing education training hours.
9. Foster parent certification files contain all the required information including documentation of current automobile insurance and CPR/First Aid certificates.

### **CLIENT VERIFICATION**

#### **Objective**

Determine whether the program participants received the services that Hathaway-Sycamores billed to DCFS.

#### **Verification**

We interviewed six children placed in six Hathaway-Sycamores certified foster homes and six foster parents to confirm the services the Agency billed to DCFS. We also observed two toddlers in the eight homes.

#### **Results**

The two toddlers that we observed appeared well cared for and happy. The foster children interviewed stated that they enjoyed living with their foster parents and the foster parents interviewed stated that the services they received from the Agency

generally met their expectations. The foster parents also indicated that they appreciated the prompt and helpful responses they received from the Agency social workers.

**Recommendation**

**There are no recommendations for this section.**

**STAFFING/CASELOAD LEVELS****Objective**

Determine whether Hathaway-Sycamores social workers' caseloads do not exceed 15 placements and whether the supervising social worker does not supervise more than six social workers, as required by the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations.

**Verification**

We interviewed Hathaway-Sycamores' administrator and supervising social worker and reviewed caseload statistics and payroll records for the Agency's social workers and supervising social worker.

**Results**

Hathaway-Sycamores' four social workers carried an average caseload of 15 cases and the Agency's supervising social worker supervised an average of four social workers.

**Recommendation**

**There are no recommendations for this section.**

**STAFFING QUALIFICATIONS****Objective**

Determine whether Hathaway-Sycamores staff possess the education and work experience qualifications required by their County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. In addition, determine whether the Agency conducted hiring clearances prior to hiring their staff and provided ongoing training to staff.

**Verification**

We interviewed Hathaway-Sycamores' administrator and reviewed each staff's personnel file for documentation to confirm their education and work experience qualifications, hiring clearances and ongoing training.

**Results**

Hathaway-Sycamores' supervising social worker and social workers possessed the education and work experience required by the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. Hathaway-Sycamores also conducted hiring clearances and provided ongoing training for staff working on the County contract. However, the Agency's administrator did not have a degree in one of the behavioral science fields required by the County contract. Prior to the conclusion of our review, Hathaway-Sycamores obtained an exemption from CDSS.

**Recommendation**

- 10. Hathaway-Sycamores management ensure that staff possess the appropriate education requirements or obtain approval from CDSS for staff that do not possess the appropriate education requirements.**

**PRIOR YEAR FOLLOW-UP****Objective**

Determine the status of the recommendations reported in the prior monitoring review completed by the Auditor-Controller.

**Verification**

We verified whether the outstanding recommendations from the Fiscal Year 2005-06 monitoring reviews were implemented. We issued reports for Hathaway and The Sycamores on October 27, 2005. Subsequent to the issuance of our reports, Hathaway and The Sycamores merged and became Hathaway-Sycamores.

**Results**

The prior monitoring reports contained six outstanding recommendations. Hathaway-Sycamores fully implemented three of the recommendations. As indicated earlier, the findings relating to recommendations 1, 2 and 8 contained in this report were also noted during the prior monitoring reviews.

**Recommendation**

- 11. Hathaway-Sycamores management implement the three outstanding recommendations from the Fiscal Year 2005-06 monitoring reports.**





October 17, 2008

To: Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke, Chair  
Supervisor Gloria Molina  
Supervisor Zeb Yaroslavsky  
Supervisor Don Knabe  
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

From: Jeri Miles, Foster Family and Adoption Agency Director

Subject: Hathaway-Sycamores Child and Family Services contract review – a department of children and family services foster family agency service provider.

The following is Hathaway-Sycamores Foster Family Agency's response to each recommendation outlined in the Auditor-Controller's review.

*Recommendations:*

1. *NSP's contain all the required information including goals that are specific, measurable and attainable and indicate the reason the child is in placement.*

**Hathaway-Sycamores Response:**

The FFA Social Workers have attended trainings provided by the County on the new template for the Needs and Service Plans. They all understand that the goals should be specific to each individual child and their specific needs. They have also received additional training in writing the Needs and Services Plans with the intent of ensuring the reason the child is in placement is indicated in the report.

2. *NSP's are approved by the children's DCFS social worker.*

**Hathaway-Sycamores Response:**

The FFA Social Workers will ensure that they make at least three attempts to obtain signatures from the children's DCFS social worker. These attempts will be noted in the child's file. The social workers will fax, mail and/or email the reports to the DCFS social worker.

3. *For children 14 year of age or older, quarterly reports contain Emancipation Preparation Contracts and Transitional Independent Living Plans and NSP's address emancipation and independent living services.*

**Hathaway-Sycamores Response:**

The FFA Social Workers will ensure that for all children 14 years of age and older that they provide them with Transitional Independent Living

*Hathaway-Sycamores Foster Family and Adoption Agency*  
West Office: 12510 Van Nuys Blvd., Suite 209, Pacoima, CA 91423 818.897.3346 Fax 818.897.1766  
East Office: 625 Fair Oaks Avenue, Suite 300, South Pasadena, CA 91030 626.395.7100 Fax 626.799.4596

Plans and Emancipation and, the NSP's will reflect what the plans are and where the child is currently at with those plans.

4. *Children taking psychotropic medications are seen monthly by their prescribing physician.*

**Hathaway-Sycamores Response:**

The FFA Social Workers will ensure that all children taking psychotropic medications have the visits to their prescribing physician documented in their file on the medication log with the physician's signature.

5. *Children are visited weekly during the first three months of placement by the Agency's social workers.*

**Hathaway-Sycamores Response:**

It is Hathaway-Sycamores policy that each FFA Social Worker visits the child in placement weekly for the first three months and no less than every 14 days thereafter.

6. *DCFS social workers are updated monthly regarding the children's progress.*

**Hathaway-Sycamores Response:**

The FFA Social Workers will ensure that the DCFS social worker is contacted regularly (no less than 1x per month). This communication will be documented on the Monthly CSW contact log.

7. *For children 18 years of age or older, age exception approvals are obtained from CDSS.*

**Hathaway-Sycamores Response:**

The FFA Social Workers will ensure that all children, 18 years and older, receive an age exception by submitting a request to Community Care Licensing and the County Social Worker.

8. *Foster parents complete the required number of annual continuing education hours.*

**Hathaway-Sycamores Response:**

It is Hathaway-Sycamores policy to ensure that all foster parents receive quality training for the children they serve. Hathaway-Sycamores provide monthly training for foster parents. In addition, foster parents are given a variety of options for training throughout the community, books, videos, etc. Foster parents are reminded each quarter how many training hours they need to be recertified.

9. *Foster parent certification files contain all the required information including documentation of current automobile insurance and CPR/First Aid certificates.*

**Hathaway-Sycamores Response:**

Hathaway-Sycamores will ensure that each foster parent file has all current and up-to-date information. Foster parents are reminded each quarter what is soon to expire within their file and are encouraged to renew these documents to be recertified.

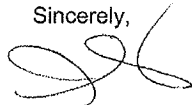
*10. Hathaway-Sycamores management ensures that staff possesses the appropriate education requirements or obtain approval from CDSS for staff that do not possess the appropriate education requirements.*

**Hathaway-Sycamores Response:**

Hathaway- Sycamores will submit an exemption request for all staff that does not meet Title 22 requirements for their particular position.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call me at 626.831.6772.

Sincerely,



Jeri Miles  
Foster Family Agency and Adoptions Director